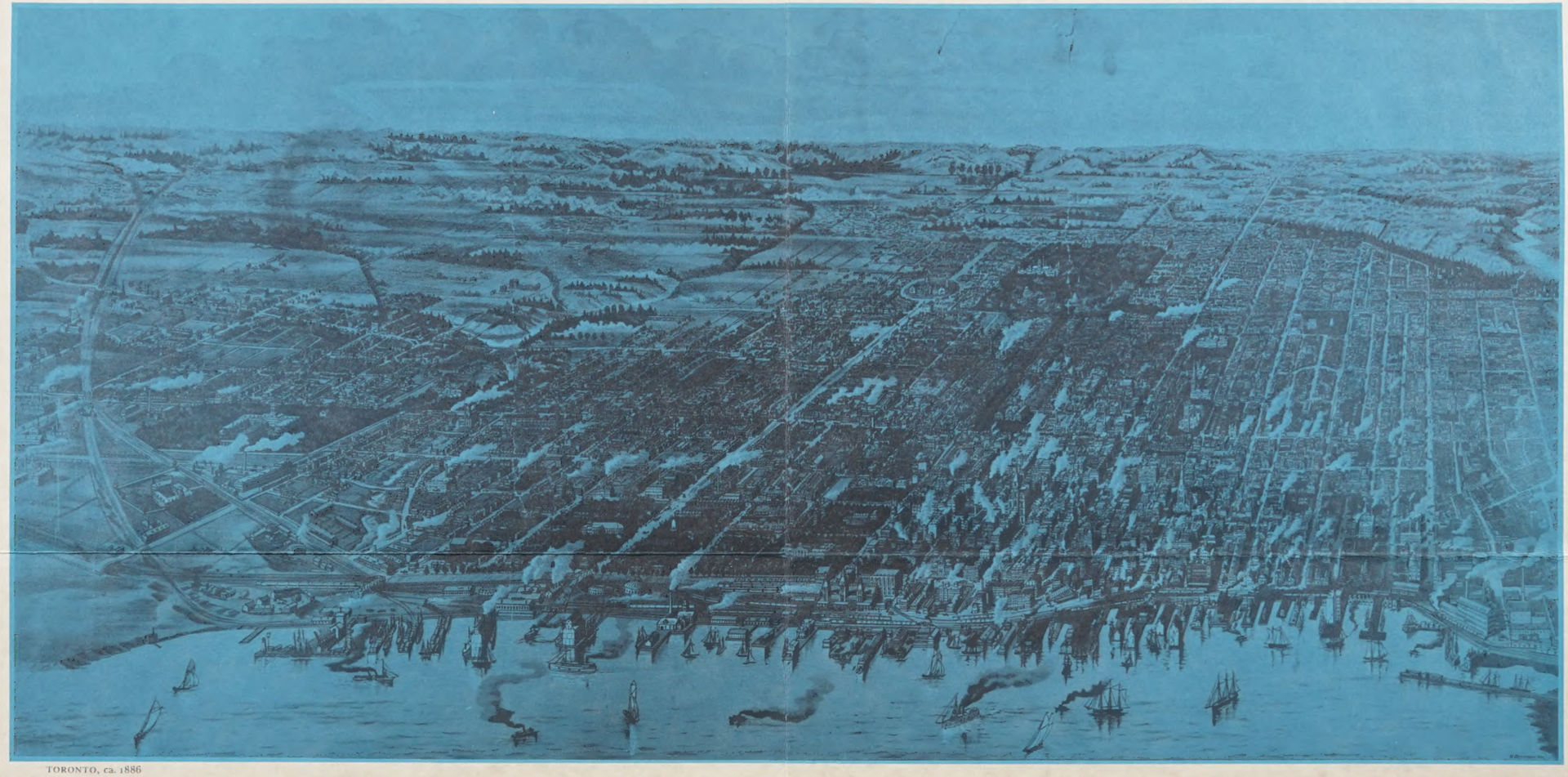

TORONTO, ca. 1886

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: A MISCELLANY

An exhibition held at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library,
University of Toronto, on the occasion of The Eighteenth ACRL Rare
Books and Manuscripts Preconference, June 14-17, 1977.

DARWIN AND POPULAR NATURAL HISTORY

CASE 1 NATURAL HISTORY in the Victorian era is invariably associated with the name of Charles Darwin, but Darwin's contribution, unique and magnificent as it was, should not obscure the fact that the study of natural history, at an 'amateur' level, was immensely popular. Along with those works of natural history that represented a significant contribution to the development of biological science, there were many more that catered to the demand for popular scientific literature. Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was an attempt to construct a wide-ranging scientific theory, formulated on the basis of years of observation and the careful consideration of evidence. Philip Henry Gosse's *The Aquarium* was written as a manual for those who wished to observe marine life in the comfort of their own drawing-rooms. While Darwin's work can be described as the greatest scientific book of the nineteenth century and as the greatest work of biological science of all time, Gosse's must remain satisfied with the honour of having started the craze for the marine aquarium which swept mid-Victorian Britain. The value of these two books in the history of science is, of course, unequal, but both sprang from the same delight in the wonders of the natural world. The spirit that led the young Darwin, a beetle in each hand, to pop one in his mouth in order to avoid losing a third, was the same spirit which led countless amateur naturalists to ramble across countryside and seashore to observe and collect plants and animals.

The Fisher Library's Darwin Collection is particularly strong in the separate editions and issues of Darwin's works. Some of the many separate printings of *On the Origin of Species* which appeared during the author's lifetime are displayed here from the 1859 first edition to the definitive 1876 'eighteenth thousand'. This great work was based on the mass of data accumulated by Darwin during the five year voyage of H.M.S. Beagle. The chart of the voyage, shown here, was issued with the third volume of the *Narrative of the Surveying Voyage of H.M.S. Adventure and Beagle* (London, 1839). The very scarce pamphlet, known as *Letters on Geology* (Cambridge, 1835) and consisting of extracts of letters from Darwin to his mentor Henslow, although published without Darwin's knowledge, can be considered his first real publication. The Reverend F.O. Morris' work, *The Demands of Darwinism on Credulity* (London, 1890) was one of many such works that attempted to combat the spread of Darwinian ideas by either argument or mockery.

Darwin was reluctant to join the public controversy that followed the publication of *On the Origin of Species* and it was left to such men as T.H. Huxley to defend and extend Darwinism. In *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (London, 1863) Huxley forcefully presented the evidence for evolution and natural selection as it applied to man.

The Victorians were great amateur naturalists and avid readers of books about natural history. The Fisher Library's Victorian Natural History Collection brings together many books written for the popular market. While these can be collectively described as 'popular,' they were firmly based on scientific principles. 'Yellow-backs' such as W.S. Coleman's *British Butterflies* and the Reverend J.G. Woods's *Common British Moths* and such works as *Ocean Flowers and their Teachings* (Bath, 1846) illustrated with preserved specimens, took their place with more substantial taxonomic descriptions of genera and species.

The Collection is particularly strong in the works of P.H. Gosse. As both a popularizer and a keen observer, Gosse waged constant battle against the 'dry-as-dust' school of scientific writing. *The Aquarium* (London, 1854) and the very scarce *Illustrations of the Birds of Jamaica* (London, 1849) are both noteworthy for the [illegible] and [illegible] illustrations.

THE POPULAR THEATRE

CASE 2 UNTIL THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY, theatre in Britain was dominated by the rivalry in London between the two royal patent theatres – Covent Garden and Drury Lane – and the other minor theatres which had sprung up in and around London during the eighteenth century. Charles II, after the Restoration, had granted a licence to two of his courtiers permitting them to form companies of actors to legally perform plays. These licences eventually created the Theatres Royal, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and restricted the performance of all legitimate drama to them. This privilege they were determined to keep despite the proliferation of other theatres offering productions which appealed to the mass audiences of London.

In 1843, the Act for Regulating Theatres was passed which ended the monopoly governing what was known as 'legitimate theatre'. Other theatres, however, like Sadlers' Wells and Astley's Royal Amphitheatre, had achieved their own successes by concentrating on the production of grand extravaganzas – farces, burlesques, operettas, pantomimes and water and equine spectacles – in which they relied on the appeal of the scenery, music and spectacular effects to excite and capture their audiences. As musical theatre was outside the confines of the patents, the minor theatres were able to circumvent the law and to stage real plays augmented by the addition of at least five songs or incidental music. These 'burlettas' made it possible for even Shakespeare to be played on stages other than Covent Garden and Drury Lane.

Nineteenth century theatres were very large buildings which made an intimate acting style impossible. Managing these huge structures, where it was difficult 'to see the countenances of the actors without the aid of a pocket spectacle' or to hear anything 'except the ranting speeches' was an enormous financial undertaking. Plays had to be chosen which appealed to a wide taste, and both the patent and other theatres competed for audiences, trying to outdo each other with magnificent productions. This was not an age of inspired or distinguished dramatic writing. Adaptations of previous successes or of French drama were most commonly staged, particularly if they were melodramatic and romantic. Of necessity, the productions needed simple plots, limited dialogue, stock characters, frequent and violent action and a lot of distracting music, to carry them off. The acting, in order to thrill and enthrall the audience, tended to be heavy, overstated and bombastic. If the public at the back could not hear, it did not hesitate to throw things at the actors, and raise a commotion so that no one else could hear either.

The popularity of this kind of theatre is self-evident in the development of the English Juvenile Drama or toy theatre. At first, souvenir engravings of favourite actors and actresses, like Kemble, Kean, and Mrs. Siddons, were sold to stage-struck youth who could embellish them in some way. As these developed from adolescent keepsakes to become a nursery game, the toy theatre sheets no longer needed to identify the performers. The paper characterization became stereotyped much like the stage plays they imitated, and the immediacy of the first productions was transferred to the delight and magic of a child's toy.

By the end of the century a dramatic revival was underway in England. The theatre began to attract a more intellectual public, and there was growing reaction against the escapism of the melodramas, romances and grand spectacles. The music-hall began to fill the role formerly played by the theatre of spectacle and a new era of popular entertainment was launched. It had been a century barren of drama but rich in theatrical excitement.

THE MIDDLE HILL PRESS

CASE 3 SIR THOMAS PHILLIPPS, Bart. (1792-1872) was a vain, irascible, quarrelsome, bigoted, prejudiced martinet and the greatest collector of manuscripts the world has ever known. He was a true bibliomaniac whose all-consuming passion allowed nothing to stand in the way of his acquisition of manuscripts and printed books of all periods on a great variety of subjects. His press, named after his residence in Worcestershire, was founded to print historical source materials from his collections and thus render them available to scholars. From its inception in 1822 until the baronet's death a steady stream of pamphlets and single sheets, miserably printed by a series of semi-literate underpaid printers who generally had to battle Phillipps for their pittance, issued from the Middle Hill Press. From a register of marriages and burials of the sixteenth century for selected small towns of Gloucestershire to *A Fragment of the Voyage of Mr. Vertigull Gulliver*, most of the press's productions concerned the local history of Great Britain. Phillipps, however, harboured an intense prejudice against the Roman Catholic Church and his press was also used to produce his periodic fulminations concerning the imagined depredations of Catholicism.

The size of the editons printed at Middle Hill varied between 25 and 100 copies and thus all the works are now scarce. Ironically Phillipps, through parsimony, impatience and an arbitrary system of distribution, failed completely in his attempt to make generally available the contents of his collections. The works he printed are almost as inaccessible today as if they had remained in manuscript.

The most extensive publication of the press was Phillipps' own catalogue of his collections. He began to publish it in 1824 and parts continued to appear at intervals almost until his death. No two copies of the completed catalogue, with its 30,000 entries, are identical. Different sizes and colours of papers were employed indiscriminately; the work abounds with cancels and revisions on odd scraps of paper, and to have received a complete set of all the editions and addenda necessitated staying on friendly terms with Phillipps for a continuous period of some forty years, an impossible task for even his intimate acquaintances.

Phillipps, in 1847, wrote to Lord Braybrooke: 'I am aware that my performances in Book-making stand in need of many apologies'. Although his assessment was certainly correct and the Middle Hill Press does not bear any resemblance to the elegant private press publications of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was a genuine Victorian private press. A collection of its publications must be considered an important research resource for the study of English genealogy, topography and medieval history.

THE NINETIES

CASE 4 IN 1895 MAX BEERBOHM, aged 23, remarked that he felt himself out-moded. 'I belong to the Beardsley period,' he said. While this was a Maxian witticism, it was to prove strangely true. The group of artists and writers who made this decade legendary, labelled by W.B. Yeats 'the tragic generation', were, in most cases, not to endure except in their creations. Beardsley and Wilde, who have come to [illegible] their works and in their lifestyle, were soon to die tragically. Beardsley's work for *The Yellow Book* stopped in the year of Beerbohm's remark, and though he contributed briefly to Arthur Symons' *Savoy*, he died in 1898, full of remorse for his more decadent productions. Oscar Wilde, the wittiest figure in the history of English letters, was to die abroad in poverty and disgrace in 1900. By this time, the whole gay nineties movement appeared to be dead. English middle class manners and morals had, for the time at least, triumphed over the aesthetes. As Holbrook Jackson has felicitously said, it was a matter of the yellow press defeating the *Yellow Book*.

Less flamboyant, but of great literary significance, was a small group which began to meet at the Cheshire Cheese in 1891. The founders of the Rhymers' Club were W.B. Yeats, T.W. Rolleston and Ernest Rhys. The meetings brought together, for the reading of their own poetry, John Davidson (a Scottish raven among the birds of paradise), Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, Richard Le Gallienne, Arthur Symons and several others including the shy Francis Thompson who came once, and Oscar Wilde who came on the occasions when the meetings were held in private houses. It is interesting that Yeats, who admired and even revered some of these poets, was the one to survive, moving on to become one of the greatest poets of the 20th century. Among them but not of them, he later was to write about them with great perception. His *Autobiographies* remain our best source of information about these tormented beings, several of whom were to die in tragic circumstances in the next few years.

Yeats' path was partially decided by his nationalist interests. The Celtic background of his early writings led him indirectly to play an important part in the Irish literary renaissance. In Scotland, the main contribution to the Celtic revival was the work of the mysterious personality, Fiona Macleod. William Sharp's skill in carrying off the double role for some years was a tremendous literary feat. Fiona's first novel, *Pharais; a Romance of the Isles*, published in Derby in 1894, now forgotten, was received with considerable respect.

The best loved representative of the period, who retired to Italy and outlived them all, was the urbane Max Beerbohm. A consummate stylist, both in his essays and in his caricatures, small essays in themselves, he lived on into the 1950's, a sane and debonair survivor of the excesses of the nineties.

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN AND THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

CASE 5

> Not here! the white north has thy bones; and thou
> Heroic sailor soul,
> Art passing on thine happier voyage now
> Toward noo earthly pole.

THESE WORDS, composed for Sir John Franklin's memorial in Westminster Abbey by his nephew by marriage, Alfred Lord Tennyson, speak for the Victorian age. They demonstrate how completely the fate of the Franklin expedition, lost in 1845, had caught the imagination of the English-speaking world, already enthralled by the whole subject of exploration.

The interest was not a new one. Like almost all Arctic expeditions before it, back to Frobisher's in 1576, Franklin's had been sent to discover the Northwest Passage, that magic trade route to the East. However, the great nations had known since early in the century that, as a commercial route, the Northwest Passage was of no value. The quest, by Franklin's time, was basically a scientific rather than a commercial one.

Franklin was far from inexperienced. He had commanded two expeditons set up to explore the Arctic coastline of North America, and, between 1819 and 1827, he had added 1200 miles of charted coastline to the map of North America.

In June 1845, Franklin set out on his third expedition, this time with instructions to cross by water from Atlantic to Pacific. The total disappearance of his party, which was last seen at the end of July, formed the prime motive for Arctic exploration for the next twenty years. Forty-two expeditions were launched, most of them inspired by Lady Franklin. In 1854, on his third voyage, Dr. John Rae sent back articles he had recovered from Eskimos who had collected them several years before at the scene of what was obviously the last camp of some of the expedition's members. Among these articles were compasses, guns, spoons and forks, and a silver plate engraved with Franklin's name. The whole world watched and waited until finally, sailing in a yacht fitted out by Lady Franklin, Captain Leopold McClintock discovered the complete story of Franklin's fate. Wintering at Beechey Island, Franklin's ships had been frozen into the pack-ice in Victoria Strait in September, 1846. Franklin died in June, 1847. Abandoning the ships in April, 1848, the survivors, 105 men under Captain F.R.M. Crozier, retreated along the western shores of King William Island, hoping to reach one of the Hudson's Bay Company posts on Back's River. They all apparently died of starvation and scurvy.

The Northwest Passage had been discovered, quite incidentally, during the search for Franklin. Captain Robert McClure had been dispatched by the British government in 1850 in charge of the second rescue expedition. Entering the Arctic by way of Bering Strait, McClure, after many vicissitudes, was rescued in 1853 by another search party under Sir Edward Belcher, who had entered via the eastern approach. Although McClure did not traverse the entire Northwest Passage in one ship, he had nevertheless proved that such a route existed.

The glamour of the search for Franklin should not be allowed to overshadow the achievements of other great nineteenth century scientists and seamen. Sir John Ross had made two voyages in search of the Northwest Passage, in 1818 and 1829. During the latter voyage, his nephew, James Ross, who accompanied him, discovered the magnetic pole. Both Rosses were active in the search for Franklin between 1848 and 1851.

Another gallant explorer, Sir George Back, accompanied Franklin on his first two expeditions and, in 1833-35, undertook a search for Sir John Ross. In 1836 Back set off on still another expedition, later described in his book *Narrative of the Expedition of H.M. Ship Terror* (London, 1838). Accompanying him was a young Lieutenant, Owen Stanley. Little was known about Stanley in Canada, except through occasional references to him in Back's *Narrative*, until the Fisher Rare Book Library acquired the unpublished journal of his expedition with Back and the accompanying album of beautiful watercolour sketches.

LORD SELKIRK AND THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

CASE 6 THOMAS DOUGLAS, 5th Earl of Selkirk (1771-1820) was a man with a vision. Appalled by the condition of the evicted Scottish highlanders and the Irish poor, he had early come to the conclusion that the only way to alleviate their distress was emigration. To achieve this, he acquired large grants of land first in Prince Edward Island (1803) and then at Baldoon, in Upper Canada. After initial hardships, the Prince Edward Island settlement, personally established by Selkirk, was successful, that at Baldoon ended in disaster. Encouraged by the former, Selkirk gradually acquired a controlling interest in the Hudson's Bay Company and obtained from it the grant of an extremely large area of land, known as Assiniboia, in the Red River valley in what eventually became part of the province of Manitoba and the state of Minnesota. In 1811 a party under Miles Macdonell was sent out to prepare the way for a large group of settlers to follow the next year. What Selkirk neglected to take into account was that the Northwest Company regarded this land as its own fur-trading preserve and would not take kindly to any attempt at settlement there. There was trouble from the first, with the Nor'Westers doing their best to hinder and discourage the settlers. When the main party arrived in 1812 they found little had been prepared for them and subsisted in great misery, particularly during the winters. After various acts of hostility on both sides, the settlers were eventually forced to leave (1815), even though Macdonell surrendered himself to the governor of the Company, Duncan Cameron, thinking thus to guarantee their safety.

The following year a second attempt at settlement was made with another group being sent out from Scotland by Selkirk, under the new governor of the Hudson's Bay Company territories, Robert Semple. This attempt ended in a pitched battle at Seven Oaks (June 19th 1816) between the settlers and a band of half-breeds, Indians and Northwest Company adherents in which Semple and twenty of his men were killed. News of this tragedy met Selkirk on his way to visit the settlement and he retaliated with an attack on the Northwest Company's headquarters at Fort William, on Lake Superior, where he arrested several of its officers and sent them east for trial. The next spring he went on to the Red River, restored order, re-established his colonists and made a treaty with the Indians in which, in return for an annual gift of two hundred pounds of tobacco, they agreed not to molest the settlers.

Court battles followed, with the Northwest Company bringing an action against Selkirk for having conspired to ruin its trade in the west. As most of the lawyers involved were in some way connected with the Company, the case went against him from the first and he was ordered to pay heavy damages. Ruined in health, Selkirk, who had all along acted from the purest motives, returned to England. He died at Pau in the south of France where he had gone in a vain search for health, on April 8th 1820. Retribution overtook the Northwest Company in 1821 when bankruptcy forced it to unite with the Hudson's Bay Company. The colony itself eventually thrived.

PROSE AND POETRY IN NINETEENTH CENTURY CANADA

CASE 7 CANADIAN LITERATURE of the early nineteenth century often reflected the conflict felt by the Loyalists, their inherent Tory outlook combined with admiration for Yankee drive and enterprise. Thomas Chandler Haliburton was, like many of Canada's early novelists, of Loyalist background. His most famous work, *The Sayings and Doings of Sam Slick*, first appeared as a series of articles for *The Nova Scotian*, the journal of Joseph Howe, an eminent statesman of Confederation. Howe first published these articles in book form in 1836. Sam Slick both represents and satirizes the Yankee character which fascinated and sometimes repelled the more conservative Nova Scotians.

By mid-century the growth of universities and technological advancement in the form of steam powered printing gave impetus to the publishing of books and periodicals. One very distinguished author of this era was Sir Charles G.D. Roberts. He published both verse and prose in the form of animal stories, historical romances and, in 1897, a history of Canada. Another popular writer was William Kirby whose novel, *The Golden Dog*, went through many editions, pirated and authorized, and has yet to be published as Kirby actually wrote it. An historical romance set in Quebec, it was based on three old Quebec legends and was eventually translated into French in 1884.

Several women novelists also enjoyed success. One of the most prolific was May Agnes Fleming who wrote forty-two novels, often set in Canada, but primarily intended for American and British readers. Sara Jeannette Duncan was drawn to England, finally settling in India, and several of her novels deal with Anglo-Indian life. From her beginnings as a successful Canadian journalist she went on to attain an international reputation as a novelist. Mary Anne Sadlier, wife of New York publisher James Sadlier, wrote novels of Irish Catholic immigrant life and one of her novels, *Elinor Preston*, was entirely set in Canada.

Susanna Moodie emigrated to Upper Canada in 1832, settling with her husband in the backwoods area of Douro township near Peterborough. Although best known for *Roughing It in the Bush*, her autobiographical account of the hardships of pioneer life faced by a woman of genteel birth, both she and her husband regularly contributed verse to Canadian newspapers and *The Literary Garland*, a major pre-Confederation periodical.

While Moodie clashed with her environment (and with her brash Yankee neighbours) native poets under the influence of the Romantics revered and idealized nature. In the writings of Archibald Lampman, an Ottawa civil servant, are the qualities of 'dreaming' and 'reverie' and classical allusions associated with the poetry of Keats. Lampman was a contributor to *The Week*, *Canadian Illustrated News*, and several American literary publications such as *Scribner's* and *Harper's*. With fellow poets William Campbell and Duncan Campbell Scott, Lampman contributed a series of literary essays entitled 'At the Mermaid Inn' to the *Toronto Globe*.

Duncan Campbell Scott, also a federal civil servant, wrote sensitive descriptions of nature, but, in his capacity as superintendent of Indian Affairs, he saw in the northern wilderness the plight of the Indian and Métis. His strong dramatic monologues convey his fascination with native folklore and sympathy for a native society endangered by white man's religion and material goods.

Bliss Carman enjoyed the best international reputation of Canada's post-Confederation poets. Born in Fredericton, N.B., he attended Harvard and resided in New York for most of his life. More regional than national, his verse is set in the Maritime provinces and New England and he is probably best known for his first collection, *Low Tide on Grand Pré*. By glorifying moonlit cabins and woodland trails in ethereal verse, Carman, perhaps more than the other major poets, adhered to the Romantic ideal of a poet's close relationship with God and nature.

TORONTO CALLED BACK

CASE 8 GRAEME MERCER ADAM, writing about Toronto in 1891, conceded that it was not a 'picturesque city,' but that it presented a rather fine view when seen from the lake. Along the waterfront the many substantial warehouses indicated Toronto's importance as a commercial and manufacturing centre. The spires and towers of its numerous churches and public buildings crowded the skyline. From the shore the land sloped gradually upward to the wooded park of the University and the countryside beyond.

By the mid 1880's Toronto's importance as a commercial centre was well established. The city directories list a wide range of manufacturing concerns from agricultural implements to wringers and washers. Wholesaling firms were numerous and two major department and mail order houses, Eaton's and Simpson's, had been established in the preceding decades. Banks, insurance companies, and other commercial institutions had head offices here. By the last decade of the nineteenth century Toronto had become the centre of the book trades for English-speaking Canada, with between forty and fifty publishing firms and the full range of supporting trades. The city had five daily papers (two of which survive combined as *The Globe and Mail*) and a great variety of popular and trade journals.

Agricultural fairs had been held in Toronto in the early days, and during the Province of Canada period (1841-66) it had several times been the site of the Provincial Exhibition, but in the 1870's the City purchased sixty acres on the lakeshore at the western limits for a permanent exhibition, and the Industrial Exhibition Association was established. The prize list for the first annual exhibition in 1879 describes awards in an impressive range of classes: agricultural, industrial and domestic. As the Canadian National Exhibition the fair has continued annually to the present.

Toronto was also an important educational and cultural centre. The University of Toronto's magnificent Romanesque building, designed by Frederic Cumberland and completed in 1859, was one of the sights of the city. The 1880's saw two important changes in University life. In 1884 women were admitted for the first time to University College. In 1889 the Federation Act came into effect, joining Victoria University of Cobourg, the theological colleges of Knox, Wycliffe, and St. Michael's, and various professional colleges and schools in a unique structure which has been compared to the Canadian Confederation. A little farther north on Bloor Street was McMaster Hall, home of the Toronto Baptist College (later McMaster University of Hamilton) and at the western outskirts the Anglican University of Trinity College. Toronto was also the home of the Province's Normal School for the education of teachers, the Ontario School of Art, and the Royal Conservatory of Music established by Mr. Edward Fisher in 1866 with money raised by public subscription. On March 6th, 1884 the citizens of Toronto celebrated the city's semi-centennial with the opening of the Toronto Free Public Library, taking over the assets of the earlier Mechanics' Institute.

Toronto was a popular city for tourists in the summer time. The stately Queen's Hotel on Front Street was recommended for its 'quietness,' while the visitor with more time could stay at the Hotel Hanlan on the Island, owned by the world famous oarsman Edward Hanlan. The new belt line railway provided a comfortable way to tour the city. The city's parks were recommended, particularly Queen's Park which was approached by tree-lined avenues from Queen and Yonge Streets. Excursions were available by train or steamer – Buffalo at $3.50 return, Cleveland $10, Chicago $23. Concerts and dramatic performances were held at the Pavilion Music Hall, built in 'Crystal Palace style.' In fact, it was not hard, in the words of a tourist guide from about 1890 to 'have a good time in and about Toronto.'

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